

Fact Sheet

March 2005



Questions and Answers

**Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area****1. What is the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program?**

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a Federal-State natural resource conservation program that addresses State and nationally significant agricultural-related environmental problems. Under CREP, program participants receive financial incentives from USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to voluntarily enroll in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in contracts of 10 to 15 years. Participants remove cropland and marginal pastureland from agricultural production and convert the land to native grasses, trees and other vegetation. CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended.

2. What is the Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP?

The Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP will help farmers conserve water quantity of the designated rivers and streams, reduce the consumptive use of surface and subsurface irrigation water, and enhance water quality and wildlife habitat by establishing permanent vegetative cover to reduce agricultural chemical and sediment runoff.

3. What are the potential benefits of the Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP?

The Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP will significantly reduce the amount of consumptive water use for irrigation and the amount of agricultural chemicals and sediment entering the state's waters. The reduction of ground and surface water use and of non-point source contaminants, through establishment of permanent vegetative cover, will also enhance associated wildlife habitat, both terrestrial and aquatic.

4. What are the goals?

The goals of the Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP are to:

- Reduce the application of water for cropland irrigation in the priority area by 125,000 acre-feet annually from current irrigated usage levels.
- Increase surface and groundwater retention by a target amount of 85,000 acre-feet of water annually within priority area reservoirs, groundwater tables and streams.
- Provide up to 85,000 additional acres of native grass-

land habitat for wildlife in the priority area, increasing the populations of pheasants and other ground-nesting birds by 25 percent in the area.

- Provide up to 15,000 additional acres of conservation buffers and restored wetlands.
- Reduce the application of triazine products by approximately 93,000 pounds annually.
- Reduce leaching of nitrate compounds into project area streams and groundwater by 5,900,000 pounds annually.
- Reduce the application of phosphate products by approximately 2,440,000 pounds annually.
- Protect community public water supplies (surface and groundwater) by reducing nitrogen and phosphorus levels from agricultural activities.
- Provide educational assistance to project priority area irrigators to develop a more efficient use of applied water, nutrients, and herbicides.
- Reduce the total consumption of fossil fuels for irrigation by 350,000 gallons and

Fact Sheet

Questions and Answers

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area

electricity use by 10 million kilowatt hours.

5. What are eligible areas and land eligibility requirements?

Landowners can offer for enrollment in CREP eligible cropland adjacent to waterways within the Platte-Republican Resources Area.

To be eligible, cropland must meet cropping history criteria and be physically and legally capable of being cropped in a normal manner.

Persons who have acreage under an existing CRP contract or an approved offer with a contract pending are ineligible for CREP on that acreage until that contract expires. Other requirements will also apply. Interested producers should contact their local FSA county office for specific information regarding their eligibility for CREP.

With regard to the Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP, irrigated and non-irrigated land may be eligible for enrollment. For irrigated land to be eligible, it must be:

- Irrigated cropland that has been cropped (a minimum of ½ acre foot/year) 4 out of the 6 years, 1996-2001;
- Irrigated cropland that is physically and legally capable of being irrigated in a normal

manner when offered for enrollment; and

- A Nebraska State Water Use Contract is entered into between the producer and the State of Nebraska covering the irrigated cropland acres. USDA does not control, regulate or impact water rights.

For non-irrigated (dryland) cropland to be eligible for enrollment, the land must be a center-pivot corner enrolled with the adjacent irrigated center-pivot cropland area.

To find out if your operation is located within the project area, contact your local FSA office.

To be eligible for CREP, the applicant must also satisfy the basic eligibility criteria for CRP.

6. When is the sign-up and how long does land remain under contract?

Sign-up for the CREP will begin April 4, 2005, and will continue until enrollment goals are met, or through December 31, 2007, whichever comes first.

Land enrolled in the program remains under contract for a period of 10 to 15 years, as specified in the contract.

7. What conservation measures are approved for the CREP?

To better serve program goals, the following CRP conservation practices are approved for the

Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP:

- CP2 - Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses
- CP4D - Permanent Wildlife Habitat
- CP21 - Filter Strips
- CP22 - Riparian Buffer
- CP23 - Wetland Restoration
- CP23A - Wetland Restoration, Non-Floodplain
- CP25 - Rare and Declining Habitat

8. What payments is FSA offering?

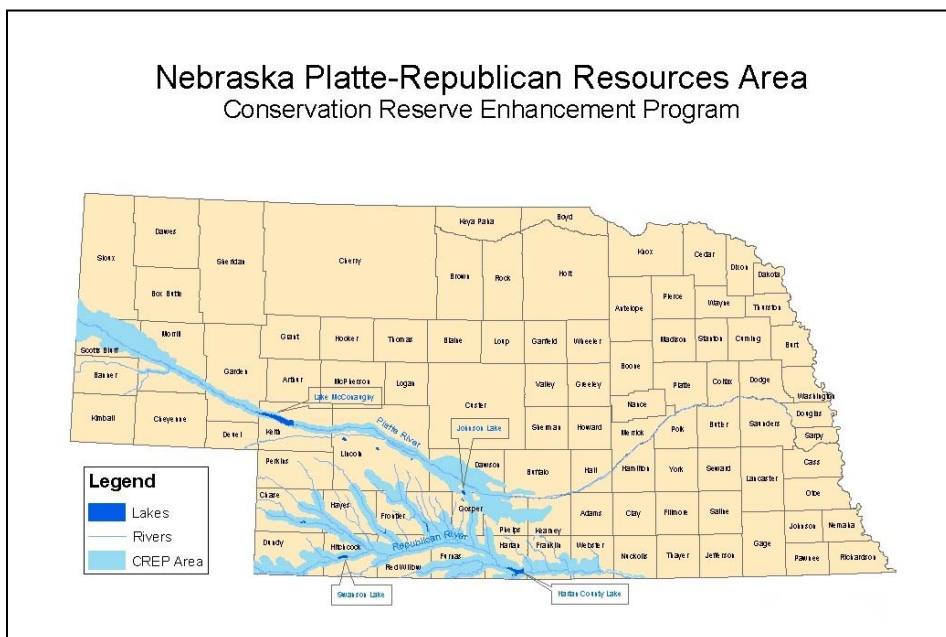
Subject to contract terms and certain limitations, Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP participants will be eligible for the following types of FSA payments:

- Annual rental payments based on irrigated rental rates for each eligible enrolled irrigated acre in which a State Water Use Contract has been secured.
- Annual rental payments based on dryland cropland rental rates for each eligible enrolled dryland crop acre.
- A one-time Signing Incentive Payment of \$10 for each eligible acre enrolled for each full year of the contract for practices CP21 and CP22. A 10-year contract would receive \$100 per acre.
- A one-time Practice Incentive Payment equal to 40 percent

Fact Sheet

Questions and Answers

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area



of the total eligible cost of practice installation for practices CP21 and CP22.

- A one-time incentive payment equal to 25 percent of the cost of restoring the hydrology of the site for practices CP23 and CP23A.

9. What is the cost of the program?

The total cost over a 15-year period is estimated at \$158 million, with FSA contributing \$122 million and the Nebraska and local partners funding \$36 million. The \$158 million does not include any costs that may be assumed by producers.

10. Can I still enroll in general CRP and continuous sign-up CRP?

Yes. CREP is another option under CRP that farmers may

select to enhance their land; applicants may still enroll eligible land in the general CRP or continuous sign-up CRP. However, CREP provides additional benefits not available through the general and/or continuous sign-up. For instance, CREP payments are at a higher effective rate.

11. Can I hay or graze my CREP land?

Haying and grazing are not permitted during the CRP contract period unless FSA allows them for emergency or managed haying and grazing purposes, if applicable, under normal CRP rules.

12. The Nebraska Platte-Republican CREP encompasses what areas?

Seven Natural Resource Districts and portions of two river basins with a portion of the following 22 counties: Buffalo, Franklin,

Gosper, Kearney, Nuckolls, Sioux, Chase, Frontier, Harlan, Keith, Phelps, Webster, Dawson, Furnas, Hayes, Lincoln, Red Willow, Dundy, Garden, Hitchcock, Morrill, and Scotts Bluff.

13. Where can I get more information?

More information on the Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP is available at local USDA Service Centers and on FSA's Web site at: www.fsa.usda.gov.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C., 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.